

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims replaces all other versions of claims previously presented.

Listing of Claims:

1 (Currently Amended): A fuel cell assembly comprising:

a fuel cell stack formed by laminating a plurality of cells;

plus and minus current extraction sections, the current extraction sections extracting current generated by the fuel cell stack and sandwiching the fuel cell stack with respect to the direction of lamination, each current extraction section comprising a current extraction plate which is fixed to an end cell positioned on an end of the fuel cell stack so as to extract the generated current, and an end plate for uniformly binding the cells of the fuel cell stack; and

a passage allowing flow of [[a]] oxygen gas and hydrogen gas during startup of the fuel cell stack at a temperature below freezing, provided for at least one of the current extraction plate and the end plate, wherein a catalyst for combusting the gas is applied to a wall face of the passage and wherein the passage passes only the current extraction sections and does not supply the fuel cell stack with the oxygen gas and hydrogen gas.

2 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell assembly as defined in Claim 1, wherein the passage for the gas is formed between the current extraction plate and the end plate.

3 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell assembly as defined in Claim 1, wherein the passage is formed inside at least one of the current extraction plate and the end plate.

4 (Cancelled)

5 (Currently Amended): A fuel cell system comprising:

a fuel cell assembly comprising;

a fuel cell stack formed by laminating a plurality of cells;

plus and minus current extraction sections, the current extraction sections extracting current generated by the fuel cell stack and sandwiching the fuel cell stack with respect to the direction of lamination, each current extraction section comprising a current extraction plate which is fixed to an end cell positioned on an end of the fuel cell stack so as to extract the generated current, and an end plate for uniformly binding the cells of the fuel cell stack;

a passage allowing flow of a fluid during startup of the fuel cell stack at a temperature below freezing, provided for at least one of the current extraction plate and the end plate, wherein the passage passes only the current extraction section and does not supply the fuel cell stack with the fluid;

a control valve which is open to supply the fluid to the passage during startup of the fuel cell stack and which is closed to stop supplying the fluid to the passage under normal conditions of the fuel cell stack after the startup; and

a heating device for heating the passage for the fluid.

6 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell system according to Claim 5, wherein the fluid is combustible and the heating device comprises a catalyst applied to the passage in order to combust the fluid.

7 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell system according to Claim 5, wherein the heating device heats the fluid and supplies the heated fluid to the passage.

8 (Original): The fuel cell system according to Claim 5, wherein the fluid is combustible and the heating device comprises an ignition device for combusting the fluid.

9 (Original): The fuel cell system according to Claim 5, wherein the heating device heats at least one of the current extraction sections when the fuel cell stack is started up.

10 (Original): The fuel cell system according to Claim 9, wherein the heating device comprises means for combusting cathode gas for the fuel cell stack and the heating device heats at least one of the current extraction sections using the heat of combustion.

11 (Original): The fuel cell system according to Claim 9, wherein the heating device comprises means for combusting a gaseous mixture of cathode gas and anode gas for the fuel cell stack and the heating device heats at least one of the current extraction sections using the heat of combustion.

12-18 (Cancelled)

19 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell system according to Claim 11, wherein the anode gas is an anode gas discharged from the fuel cell stack.

20 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell system according to Claim 9, wherein the heating device comprises means for supplying anode gas for the fuel cell stack to the current extraction sections after supplying cathode gas for the fuel cell stack to the current extraction sections and means for combusting the gaseous mixture of anode gas and cathode gas.

21 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell system according to Claim 20, wherein the anode gas is an anode gas discharged from the fuel cell stack.

22 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell system according to Claim 5, wherein the passage for the fluid is formed between the current extraction plate and the end plate.

23 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell system according to Claim 5, wherein the passage is formed in at least one of the current extraction plate and the end plate.

24 (Previously Presented): A fuel cell assembly comprising:

a fuel cell stack formed by laminating a plurality of cells;

plus and minus current extraction sections, the current extraction sections extracting current generated by the fuel cell stack and sandwiching the fuel cell stack with respect to the direction of lamination, each current extraction section comprising a current extraction plate which is fixed to an end cell positioned on an end of the fuel cell stack so as to extract the generated current, and an end plate for uniformly binding the cells of the fuel cell stack; and

an enclosed cavity for confining gas therein formed in at least one of the current extraction sections, the gas being sealed in the enclosed cavity at reduced pressure;

wherein the end plate is formed from a material which has a lower coefficient of thermal conductivity than a material for forming the current extraction plate.

25 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell assembly as defined in Claim 24, wherein each current extraction section comprises a current extraction plate for extracting the generated current and an end plate for uniformly binding the cells of the fuel cell stack, and wherein the enclosed cavity is formed between the current extraction plate and the end plate.

26 (Previously Presented): The fuel cell assembly as defined in Claim 24, wherein each current extraction section comprises a current extraction plate for extracting the generated current and an end plate uniformly binding the cells of the fuel cell stack, the enclosed cavity being formed inside at least one of the current extraction plate and the end plate.

27 (Cancelled)